WINGED TRAILS

LOUIS DE JEAN

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Winged Trails

LOUIS DE JEAN

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BY

LOUIS DE JEAN

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WINGED TRAILS

BY

LOUIS DE JEAN

CONQUEST - - - - - - - - - - - 7
SEVEN DEAD FLIERS - - - - - - - - 9
SONG OF THE MOTOR - - - - - - - 19
TOP OF THE WORLD - - - - - - - 20
ECONOMY - - - - - - - - - - - 21
OUR NEXT WAR - - - - - - - - - 22
THE NEW HIGHWAY - - - - - - - - 24
UP TO THE SKY - - - - - - - - - 25
THE MAIL PILOT'S DREAM - - - - - 28
AIRPLANE AHOY! - - - - - - - - 31
MERCURY AND THE MAIL PILOT - - - 32
LOOKING AHEAD - - - - - - - - 33
THE STUNT PILOT'S LAMENT - - - 34
RIDING THE WIND - - - - - - - - 35
THE CROCK'S COMPLAINT - - - - - 36
MY PUP AND I - - - - - - - - - 37
THE SHOOTING STAR - - - - - - - 40
A FLIGHT OF FANCY - - - - - - - 43
C. O. D. - - - - - - - - - - - 45
THE BALLAD OF BENNY BELL - - - 47
A HIGH FLIER - - - - - - - - - 50
A GHOST STORY - - - - - - - - 52
A JOY RIDE - - - - - - - - - - 54
THE FLYING FISH - - - - - - - - 56
THE FOURTH DIMENSION - - - - - 57
MERMAIDS OF THE AIR - - - - - - 58
WINGING WESTWARD - - - - - - - 60
THE GYPSY FLIER - - - - - - - - 62
DON JOHN'S LAST FLIGHT - - - - - 63
LOOKING DOWN - - - - - - - - - 68
A FLIER'S PHILOSOPHY - - - - - 70
THE LAST JUMP - - - - - - - - - 72
THE PULITZER CUP - - - - - - - 73
FIRE - - - - - - - - - - - - 74
SLOW-MARCH! - - - - - - - - - 75
TALIAFERRO'S DEAD - - - - - - - 76
TWELVE SOLILOQUIES - - - - - - 78

CONQUEST

Wake! bold spirit of Columbus!
Rise! proud shade of Francis Drake!
Cartier, Cortez, DeSoto,
Cast aside your shrouds—awake!

There's an element unconquered;
There are oceans none has sailed;
There are dangers never dreamed of;
There are heights no man has scaled.

There is work that wants the bravest;
Romance sounds her bugle call.
Throw aside the bonds that hold you;
Throw off tyrant Time's dark thrall.

Up! to arms! the bugle calls you!
Grim adventure lives once more.
Deathless fame is knocking, waiting;
Waits without your time-locked door.

* * *

There are men who grow impatient
With this unromantic age.
There are men who crave adventure,
Men to whom this world's a cage.

There are men who roam the jungles;
There are men who rove the seas;
But the maddest and the gladdest
Are the men who sail the breeze.

They've retrieved adventure's banner,
A besmirched, forgotten rag.
They have taken up the challenge;
They have taken up the flag.

They have dared the stormy heavens:
They have mapped the great unknown.
They have woo'd a fickle goddess,
And have won her for their own.

They have woo'd a haughty virgin;
They have won the goddess Flight.
They will claim her; they will tame her;
She will serve them day and night.

She'll be slave of man forever,
Doing penance, just and fair,
For the sacrifice demanded
In the conquest of the air.

* * *

Oh! you hardy, restless spirits
Of the past, that men acclaim,
We are adding to your number
In the Ages' Hall of Fame.

These are names that you'll be proud of;
They are names that cannot die—
Pioneers, awake! and welcome
Those who dared to win the sky!

Ballad of
THE SEVEN DEAD FLIERS

My friends, at last the time is past
When dead men tell no tales.
With curdling shout the truth will out,
Though tight the coffin nails.
You'll find no dream behind my scheme
To blaze these tragic trails.

At the top of the bowl we call the sky,
Where hovers the spirit horde,
Seven ghosts of the venturesome men
who fly
Sat at a banquet board.

"Fill up your gallon goblets, gang,"
The tall toastmaster said.
"Drink deep of the ozone's fiery tang,
And tell why you are dead."

Said the first: "My name is Bert LaDue,
And I died at twenty-three.
An Army DeH. was the ship I flew,
And the ship which burned with me.

"My mind was not on the job that day;
No one but myself to blame.
My busy old bean was planning a play
For winning my favorite game.

"A sweet little thing of seventeen
Was ordained to be mine that night.
A joy-ride, gin, and a parked machine—
Well, the cards would be layin' right.

"I was dreamin' of kissing her fresh
young lips,
And of winning, move by move,
As I garnered each of Modesty's chips,
In the poker game of love.

"I was feeling her feverish breath on my
face,
As she quivered to my caress;
I was holding her close in eager embrace;
And I knew the thrill of success.

"I saw acquiescence in misty eyes,
But I didn't see the wires
Or poles of a power line which lies
In wait for dreaming fliers.

"Well, boys, that's all—I'll pass the dice;
But take it from one who knows,
Compared with high voltage all women
are ice—
In those wires real passion flows!"

Then up spoke a pilot named McIntyre:
"Lads—I haven't much of a tale.
I've been a fairly conservative flier,
For I flew the aerial mail.

"I had a wife, and a girl and boy;
They meant a lot to me.
This run I was thinkin' of those kids' joy
In the next day's jubilee.

"It was Christmas Eve when I made that
flight,
On the Elko to Salt Lake jump.
The lights of the City were coming in
sight,
When I hit a hell of a bump.

"A nasty up-current had struck the ship—
No, nothing to worry about—
But just then I felt a wing buckle and
whip,
And I knew it was time to get out.

"I swung off and jumped—it was three
thousand down—
I yanked on the parachute ring—
And, boys, that bag stuck to my back as
no crown
Ever stuck on the head of a king!

"Well, I thought of the wife and the kids—
and the mail,
And I wondered just who was to blame;
My ship—or the parachute, folded to
fail—
My mechanic—or was it the game?"

* * *

"Naw—it's all luck!" said a flier named
Tate,
A dare-devil, carefree ghost.
"I'm an ex-stunt pilot, and laughing at
Fate
Was the joke I loved the most.

"Luck was my mate, and the stunts we
tried
Used to make Death shudder with shame.
For my faithful bride always stood by
my side,
And thwarted calamity's claim.

"One day I left my love, and strayed—
As damn fool men will do—
And courted Caution—a rival maid—
And a stiff-necked virgin, too.

"I was changing planes, from atop a wing.
A ladder swung overhead.
At the end I had tied a wire ring
To make the rope loop spread.

"Well, I balanced myself on our coasting
plane,
And the ship from above swooped near.
It came too close, and the hempen chain
Fouled on our driving gear.

"That ring settled over the idling blade
Of our prop like a quoit well-tossed.
The rope would have broken—the metal
stayed!
There were three fool fliers lost."

* * *

"It may be flying's a game of chance,"
Another pilot began,
"But an element I'd call ignorance
Sort of shortened my earthly span.

"I'm a Navy blimp pilot, by name of
Burke.
I was sent on a cross-country flight
In the path of a storm—important
work—
A political battle in sight.

"The lightning struck, and the big bag
broke;
Then a Fourth of July display
Of fireworks ensued, as we went up in
smoke.
'Twas a Roman holiday!

"Twelve men in our crew, and all but two
Were trapped by that flaming torch.
It was hell on wheels to hear the squeals,
And to smell the bodies scorch.

"Yes, it may be all luck, this sailing the sky;
But I think—now, maybe I'm wrong—
When some of the men who give orders shall die,
The odds won't be quite so damn long!"

* * *

"Right you are," said another, a flier named Dobbs;
"Just hearken to this dizzy tale:
I belonged to an Army Artillery Obs.,
And I flew a ninety-mile snail.

"I was up draggin' targets for anti-aircraft,
And the gunners were missing so far
I took pity and slowed my old sky-goin' raft
To a trot thirty miles below par.

"And what do you think—I swear it's no lie—
Those gunners below got so mad
That, aiming their guns at the sky, let fly
Every bit of shrapnel they had.

"Well, one of those shells must have
carried my name;
For it sure arrived—as you see.
That day the A-A's won lasting fame;
They scored a fair hit—on me!"

* * *

A tall, red-haired ghost stood up to
stretch.
"That's a hot one," he said, "if true.
Now my little yarn is another good
sketch—
My handle is Horace Rugh.

"Five hundred hours without a crash;
Then I signed as scenery
For a film of the usual super-trash,
With a star of high degree.

"Now I was supposed to fly afar
In the background, over the beach.
On a spray-splashed rock sat the super-
star,
An undressed, high-priced peach.

"The first time I crossed the cliffs too high,
Reported the camera man.
So I said to myself, I'll fly as nigh
To the star as I possibly can.

"Well, over I came, and close this time,
And I got a good view as I crossed.
Boys, she made the Lorelei look like a
dime!
I saw too much—and was lost.

"The cliffs came near—I forgot about
height;
My eyes saw nothing but arms;
White arms outstretched, and body of
white,
With its highly expensive charms.

"You, friend LaDue, with your pleasant
dream,
You hadn't a thing on me.
When I hit, white flesh with a silky gleam
Was all that my eyes could see.

"I've read of sirens, who lure men in flocks
To destruction at their sweet will;
But this is no legend—I crashed on those
rocks—
And, boys, I see her still!"

* * *

A ghostly laughter shook the cloud,
Where sat the ghostly dead.
Then up rose the seventh, stern and
proud.
"My name's Bob Steel," he said.

The rest of the fliers shouted: "Hear!
To the Flying Fool all hail!"
Then listened, for "Steel" is a name to revere
Along the fliers' trail.

"Boys," said Steel, "we have had our fun,
And it's time for a serious word.
But first I'll tell of my last race run,
Just in case you haven't heard.

"I was entered for the Pulitzer Cup.
You're fliers, and know what it means;
The trophy to which all pilots look up,
The last test of men and machines.

"I had groomed my tiny racing plane
To the smallest bolt and bore.
She was purring smooth, and tuned to attain
Five miles a minute or more.

"Well, the barrier's down, and we hit the trail
On the ten-mile straightaway.
Old Time is yap-yapping at our tail
As on to the stretch we sway.

"We're going good, but hardly enough,
And I beg my ship for speed.
To win this race is bound to be tough,
So I spur my steel-lunged steed.

"Well, boys, some of you know the rest;
How my little ship flew apart.
When she found she couldn't keep abreast
Of me—well, it broke her heart.

"A hundred thousand fans were there.
My father and mother and wife
Saw me hit the ground; but, fellows, I
swear
'Twas the greatest day of my life.

"I'd do it again; and all of you
Would do it just the same.
For fliers fly as lovers woo;
Just for love of the game.

"So stand up, every ghost of you,
And drink a ghostly toast or two—
A toast for the boys who've gone!
Then here's to the ships and the heaving
sky,
And here's to the pilots who dare and
die;
Yes, here's to all the men who fly—
And hail to an *Air Age Dawn!*"

SONG OF THE MOTOR

Hark to the pound of the pistons;
Thrill to the bell-like peal.
Attune your ear to their cadence—
Hark to the song of steel.

Listen and you will hear it,
For it sings and sighs and hums.
The cylinders are cymbals;
Explosions are the drums.

Each valve with its stem staccato
Is a twittering mandolin;
And the tinkling tune of the pistons
Softens the rhythmic din.

Exhaust is a blaring trumpet;
The intake's whistle and moan
Are the sucking sounds of a 'cello,
Or a sniveling saxophone.

Hark to the purr of the pistons,
To the crankshaft's oily squeal:
Hark to the musical motor—
An orchestra of steel!

TOP OF THE WORLD

Have you ever gone up on the roof of the world,
To the top of our great azure bowl?
Have you hovered on high in the rimless sky,
Like an eagle on patrol?

You will feel you are monarch of all you survey,
But you will not care long to reign,
For it's lonely up there in that silent nowhere;
You'll be glad to get back to earth's plane.

It is good to go up and look down on the world;
But you'll find, if you linger long,
That naught can atone for the loss of one's own,
And you'll wish yourself back in the throng.

ECONOMY

Ours is a land of distances,
Mountain range and wide plateau;
And long have we paid a heavy toll,
That transportation's wheels might roll,
But paid it cheerfully, and know
That was economy.

Ours is a land of enterprise;
Progress here has reached its height.
Yet, now that in our grasp control
Of heaven's highway lies, we dole
With miser hand a meagre mite,
And talk economy.

Millions for building bridge or grade;
Billions for tunnel, road and rail!
It's costly traveling by land,
And slow by sea, so let's command
A faster, cheaper route, and hail
Airway economy!

OUR NEXT WAR

"Not one cent for tribute, but millions for defense!"
That sounded well a hundred years ago;
But a million millions soon will be of little consequence
In defending us from predatory foe.

We are squandering our millions in a manner free and fast
On defenses like a fragile house of cards.
Our Napoleonic men of war are living in that past
When fences were a garden's only guards.

When the aerial fleets fly o'er us and send down their loads of death;
When we have to seek our burrows like the mole;
When the choking gas sweeps on us and we cannot draw our breath,
Then the War God will exact a fearful toll.

When our undefended cities are destroyed by unseen force,
Like an ant-hill being crushed by giant foot,
Then we'll realize the blindness and the folly of our course,
In pretending that we've killed War's stubborn root.

This old world is fast progressing in a
scientific way,
But we still are subject to a cosmic code.
"The survival of the fittest" is a law we all
obey—
Let our leaders choose with care our Nation's
road!

THE NEW HIGHWAY

We have made our roads o'er hill and dale;
We have charted off the seas.
Now it's up to us to mark the trail
For the ship that sails the breeze.

There are holes to fill in laying street;
There are currents in the ocean.
But up on high, where trade-winds meet,
There are holes and hills in motion.

There are currents up and currents down;
There are currents east and west;
And a thousand bumps above a town,
Or a lake or mountain crest.

There are holes in which a plane may drop
For a hundred feet or more.
There are spaces where the whirring "prop"
Cannot clutch the air before.

Night brings calm sky for those who fly;
Noon finds the air-seas rough.
Strong wind may mean it's smooth up high.
Earth calm is not enough.

These are problems that will bring an ache
To the heads of navigators
And engineers who try to make
The roads for aviators!

UP TO THE SKY

We're off! the field is falling—we're on the
eagle's track!
The pistons pound in rhythmic sound like
throbbing roll of drums.
The hounds of Time, with lolling tongues, are
baying at our back.
Unfaltering our keen propeller purrs and whirs
and hums.

Are those the wires wailing with a sad but siren
wail?
Are those soft moans the whispers of the rest-
less, roving dead
Who haunt the upper air and ride the lashing,
gnashing gale?
(Perhaps we'll find some mermaids in that
cloud-bank just ahead.)

Our craft is climbing skyward—shining snout is
cleaving space.
This creature made of metal, wood and fabric
has become
A thing of bone and sinew, with an airy, fairy
grace;
To some a soaring dragon, with a sullen, angry
hum.

Look down upon that world below, that checkered map of green,
Those ant-hills that are swarming with the city's teeming life.
No longer are we part of it—an ocean lies between;
A sea which drowns the sorry sounds of endless human strife.

Our ship is on a steady keel—the harbor's far below.
We mount until the world is but a ball beneath our bow.
What was it old Columbus said five hundred years ago?
"Sail on, and on!" What would he say if he were with us now?

Though high in flight, we're still in sight of land—but here's a cloud!
Now earth is gone and we're adrift in silent, empty skies,
Where living men have never been, close wrapped in blinding shroud.
A thrill of fear, a thrill of pride—with each the other vies.

(At journey's close remember those who woo'd
the goddess Flight—
Our pioneers of recent years—for greater there
are none.)
The sky again is guileless blue; the sun again
is bright.
Our vision clears, our harbor nears; the voyage
soon is done.

With motor silent now, we slide down shrieking
space and glide
To level land—but you will know, your hand
upon the helm—
Adventure lies in azure skies, in airways'
surging tide;
Adventure waits within the gates of heaven's
mystic realm!

THE MAIL PILOT'S DREAM

Droning, buzzing, roaring, whining
Over forest, town and field;
Whining, roaring, buzzing, droning—
Rolled-up mileage still unreeled.

Stealthy sleep, insinuating,
Steals away my waking powers.
Drowsy dreams come softly shrouding
Consciousness of sluggish hours.

In the parlor observation
Of an overland express,
Lolling lazily and dozing,
Stretch to rout my drowsiness.

Now I gaze through clouded windows,
And my eyes search near and far.
Nothing meets my misty vision;
Empty space surrounds the car.

But below, through floor transparent,
Looms a world in miniature,
Like a telescopic planet
Which in part the clouds obscure.

Now it seems I can discern a
Continent much like our own
In its form and winding rivers—
Silver snakes—from Pole to Zone.

North America's wide stretches,
South and east to north and west,
Panama to icy Artic,
Tampa to McKinley's crest.

Now the globe is slowly turning,
Coming closer all the while;
Now an ocean slips beneath us;
Now a tiny emerald isle.

Downward, like a comet shooting,
Earth inflating as we near;
Now the Thames and murky London,
Channel cliffs and France appear.

Very low we pass near Paris;
Now the Alps loom up ahead.
(Startled, from the arms of slumber
I escape, spurred on by dread.)

Wake! you muddle-headed pilot!
Quick! no time to think or pray!
Only luck and instinct left you;
(May not be your lucky day!)

Close ahead a jagged mountain
Bars the path—forbidding, grim.
There is left no time for turning,
And I barely vault the rim.

Then I vowed to keep my visions
Of the future for my bed;
For to sleep above the Rockies
Means: "mail pilot—lost, or dead."

AIRPLANE AHOY!

Breeze is blowing, air is clear,
And I'm going far from here
Up through the blue.
Motor roaring, to the sky
I go soaring up on high.
To earth adieu.

Pistons drumming, measured chime;
Wires humming, rhythmic rhyme;
Propeller whir-r-rs.
Sun is shining on the wings;
Wind is whining; pilot sings;
The motor pur-r-rs.

Softly slipping through the air,
Sometimes dipping, debonair,
A thing of joy.
Pleasure giving, soothes unrest;
This is living, at its best.
Airplane, ahoy!

MERCURY AND THE MAIL PILOT

When I was but a boy of nine,
The ancient myths I used to read;
Of Jove and other folks divine,
And marvel at each wondrous deed.

Minerva, Mars and Phoebus were
Among those whom I thought were great;
But Mercury, the messenger,
Was he that I would emulate.

With wingéd shoes and wingéd hat,
He used to scoot across the sky.
I often thought how I'd like that,
And long for wings so I could fly.

Who would have guessed that, some years later,
My youthful dream would happen true;
That I would be an aviator,
And sail my ship up in the blue!

LOOKING AHEAD

Who knows what may happen a year from now,
Or ten, or a hundred, or more?
Who knows what the world will be doing, or how
It will look, and what is in store?

A decade from now the world may be changed,
Or there may be no world here at all.
Some tell us the Fates have it all arranged,
And some tell us what will befall.

Now I do not claim to be prophet or seer,
But when everything seems in a mess,
I jump in my plane and go up to hear
What's in the ethereal press.

The wireless news that comes to me there,
From Mercury, Moon and Mars,
Gives me a warning of what to beware,
And tells me the mood of the stars.

And always I find, if I can't see ahead,
That to look from afar at our world,
Will clear up my vision and drive away dread
Of the page that will next be unfurled.

THE STUNT PILOT'S LAMENT

I long for the wires' whining;
I long for the motor's roar.
My venturous soul is pining
To go up in a plane once more.

I want to go up in the cloud-banks;
I want to be back in the game.
I want to return to the proud ranks
Of the dare-devil seekers of fame.

The thrill of the flight is calling;
The thrill of the open sky.
This life of inaction is palling—
I'm wild for a chance to fly!

No more of the looping and spinning;
No more can I side-slip and roll.
No more of my daring feats winning
The applause that was my goal.

No more do the circus crowds hail me:
"A flier who's stranger to fear."
Who'd have thought that my ship
would fail me,
And I'd lie on my back for a year?

RIDING THE WIND

I like to go up in my little scout plane,
When the North Wind is blowing a gale.
I like to pursue the scurrying clouds,
And tread on old Boreas' tail.

It's fun to lift up my little ship's nose,
And head right into the teeth
Of the wintry blast, and go clawing up,
Till the field is far beneath.

The harsh wind howls through wires and
wings,
And bites through my fleece-lined coat.
It freezes my breath and whips my face,
And drives back the song in my throat.

But it speeds up my pulse to battle the wind,
And I think of the Vikings of old,
How they conquered the sea in their frail
little ships—
Did they stop for the wind and the cold!

THE CROCK'S COMPLAINT

Give me the motor's roar;
Give me the wires' whine.
I won't stay down any more.
None of your "ground" for mine.

Take a peek at these wings.
Go and look in my pilot's log.
How did I get these things?
I'm no pedagogue!

Think of my teaching the kids
How to fly, on the ground!
What if the Colonel forbids
Me to go—he isn't around.

Let me take up my old scout;
I won't be gone very long.
Follow me up if you doubt
I am fit—you'll find you're wrong.

What if I did have a crash?
That's something any may do.
Yes, I'm a crock from that smash,
But you're wrong if you think I am
through!

MY PUP AND I

Here on the earth it was dismal and wet,
And I longed for the sun—his rise and his set.
For three whole days he had not appeared.
Must I wait till clouds and mist have cleared?
But no! If he would not come to me,
I'd go to him! How? Wait and you'll see.

On with my goggles, helmet and coat;
Out to the field where the airplanes float
When the weather is clear and sunny and bright,
Like a flock of birds in graceful flight.
On days like this we are not supposed
To fly, and I find the hangar is closed.
But, reckless to go, I open the gates,
And drag my Pup from the nest where it waits
Out to the wet, muddy field underneath,
And the cold, clammy mist which it chokes me
to breathe.

With one whirl I start the propeller to whirring.
The motor coughs once; my brave Pup is
stirring,
Vibrating, trembling, and eager to start.
Into the cockpit I jump, and my heart
Throbs to the motor's steady pound
As I open the throttle and spurn the ground.

---

* A Sopwith "Pup" was a delicate little scout plane used by the Royal Flying Corps in 1916.

There's a roar and a rush; then upward we
plunge.
Into the blanket of moisture we lunge.
I ease back the stick, and in circles we soar
Into the thick, murky mist with a roar.
My staunch little Pup pants and climbs for air
Up to the top, where skies are fair.

Many long minutes have passed in flight
When we break to the surface—a beautiful
sight!
Out of the dark and out of the night
We leap with a bound; we're in a bright light.
Silvery clouds all round us float;
Through them we pass as through spray in a
boat.
Above, looking down, is our old friend Sol.
With a welcoming grin he invites us to call;
But I think of the story of Icarus' wings,
And decide I'll stay with earthly things.

But suppose—the chill thought all at once
through my mind
Flashed, and I looked to both sides and behind,
That I can't find the way back to my world
again;
Would I drift here in space through eternity? Then
A feeling of loneliness over me swept,
And I glanced at the dial where a hand slowly
crept

To a number which told me that four miles and
more
Now lay between plane and earth's friendly
floor.

Then quickly I shut off the throttle and waited
In fear and trembling, with breathing abated,
As the motor was hushed and the whine of wires
Died out. Then in whispers the tinkling of lyres
And sweet sounds of singing rang in my ears.
Could it be I was hearing the Music of Spheres?

A quick, sudden lurch and a sickening drop
Aroused me. (When flying, a plane cannot stop.)
Then out of the blue and away from the sun,
Into the ocean of dampness we spun.
Then into a spiral and back to a spin,
Till it seemed as though I never would win
Down to the earth whence I'd strayed so far—
Look out! there's going to be a jar!
Too late—I have hit—I certainly crashed!
Unhurt, but my Pup is sadly smashed.

The moral: Impatience doesn't pay.
Best to await a sunny day.

THE SHOOTING STAR

One clear, hot night in mid-July
I couldn't go to sleep,
Although I tried to stupefy
My brain by counting sheep.

At last I dressed and went outside—
It was a lovely night—
I hopped into my plane and hied
Me to a starry height.

And presently a Shooting Star
Came scooting 'cross the sky.
I waved and hailed her from afar,
But I got no reply.

So after her at once I chased,
To see where she was bound.
And then some million miles we raced,
Around and round and round.

But finally she stopped to rest,
And I alongside came.
I asked: "What causes your unrest,
And what's your maiden name?"

In bitter accents she replied:
"My name I cannot tell,
For just last month my body died,
And you would know me well.

"But I was once just such a fool
As you would be, my friend.
I never let my motor cool
Until my frightful end.

"I used to have a lot of fun,
For pleasure I pursued.
I chased and caught them one by one—
The fancies that elude.

"The world was moving quite too slow;
Its pulse I tried to speed.
Indulgence I could not forego;
Excitement was my creed.

"When I had tired of every game
Down in our world below,
Up to the Milky Way I came,
To see what made it flow.

"I ran into a Super-Star,
In crossing of the stream.
Upon her face I left a scar,
And marred her glossy gleam.

"The gods proclaimed my punishment
For such a breach of code,
Should be, that in their firmament,
My soul should seek a road.

"And here I'm doomed eternally
Through universe to speed.
(It may have been a just decree,
For laws I wouldn't heed.)

"Take my advice and do not chase
Your passing fancy's whim;
But settle down and mend your pace,
And keep your candles dim."

With those last words she wiped her eyes
And shook her fiery mane;
Then off she shot to scour the skies
For her elusive lane.

And every time I see her there,
A-rushing to and fro,
I think of her insane despair,
And know I'd best go slow!

A FLIGHT OF FANCY

Come, fly with me and let us flee
From earthly care and strife.
Once in my plane we soon will gain
A joyous view of life.

We'll soar through space and gaily race
The eagle in his flight.
Through heaven's realm I'll lift our helm
Until we're miles in height.

Up there I'm king, and we can sing
For joy that we are free.
My throne looks down on field and town,
On land and lake and sea.

We'll ride and reign o'er my domain
More absolute than Jove,
In ancient times, 'mid Grecian climes,
When great Olympus throve.

We'll leave earth's tomb, its dreary
gloom,
If only for an hour,
And skyward stray through cloudy spray
To heaven's sunny bower.

We'll go and try to verify
The tale of rainbow's end.
A pot of gold we may behold;
We'll bring it home to spend.

Or better yet, we'll just forget
The way back down to earth.
A call we'll pay the Milky Way,
And find a starry berth.

Our world's too small—I've seen it all,
And now I want to go
To see some more, and to explore
The worlds we do not know.

C. O. D.

A flier named Bill met a girl
At a masquerade charity ball.
Said Bill: "You're the prettiest pearl
In this blankety-blank dance hall!
What say we go for a whirl?"

Now this little girl wasn't slow,
And she didn't back down when Bill
Drove up his airplane. "Let's go!"
Said she. "Can you give me a thrill?"
"Mebbe so," said Bill; "mebbe so."

Soon the two were climbing the sky,
And only the stars looked on.
The motor was hitting on high,
But when three hours were gone,
So was the gas supply.

Bill landed his ship in a lake;
Then found he had carelessly crossed
Ten states, and that it would take
Two days to return. "We are lost!"
Cried the girl. "Oh, what a mistake!

"I should never have come with you.
Oh, how can I ever explain?
My husband's implacable, too.
I know we'll both be slain!"
"Be yourself," said Bill. "Pooh-pooh!"

Then he bundled her up in a sack,
And marked it: "S. D.—Parcel Post,"
Saying, "Lucky we're near the main
track
Of the air mail line, coast to coast.
'Bye, darling—I'll not be back!"

THE BALLAD OF BENNY BELL

Benny Bell was the cutest little baby,
The kind of baby all the girls adore;
And the bigger Benny grew, he got sweeter,
So they babied Benny Bell more and more.

When Benny got to going with the fellows,
They teased him and displeased him o'er and
o'er
With digs about his dimples and complexion,
Till one day Benny got so mad he swore!

"I wish you nasty boys would stop your teasing!
It's just the sort of thing I most abhor;
And some day I'll do something very desprit,
Then you'll never bother Benny any more!"

When Benny reached the virile age of twenty,
He was cuter than he'd ever been before;
But at last he got so sick of being petted
That he went and joined the Spanish Flying
Corps.

"Now that I'm a daring, dev'lish aviator,"
Said Benny, "they won't tease me any more."
And he looked so very darling as he said it,
In the tricky little uniform he wore.

But to poor Benny's great disappointment,
The fliers in the Spanish Flying Corps
Were a jeering, sneering, leering lot of hoodlums,
And Benny suffered same as heretofore.

"I'll have to teach these silly fellows something,"
Said Benny, who was getting pretty sore.
"I shall lick the Moorish army single-handed!"
Then his ship took the ether with a roar.

When a week or two had passed, and still no Benny,
His friends began to worry and deplore
His fate in the hands of the tribesmen,
Who were thirsting for an aviator's gore.

But one evening of the third week thereafter,
Came a courier to the Spanish General's door
From the Caliph of the rebel Moorish army,
And this is the message that he bore:

"I'll surrender," said the mighty Moorish Caliph.
"On condition that Your Highness will restore
My harem of a hundred treasured houris,
Who've deserted me, I fear, forevermore.

"They have fallen for a prisoner, a flier;
A beardless youth whose years are but a score.
If you will take away this interloper,
I will never give you trouble any more!"

Now it's said that the harum-scarum beauties
Let the angry Caliph threaten and implore,
But refused to be parted from their Benny.
"He's the kind of boy," they said, "we just
adore!"

Then they gave their bearded sheik his walking
papers,
And the last we heard of Benny Bell, he wore
A caliph's crown and sleeping gown and
slippers;
So we cannot kid our Benny any more!

A HIGH FLIER

Robert T. Bones is a woozy, boozy flier.
To swim the Milky Way is his great desire.
Every time he hops in his sky-going ship,
He whoops: "Here we go! Let 'er roar! Let 'er rip!
For the very tip top of the sky I'm bound.
So long, everyone, 'n' good-by ground!"

One night Bob drank a quart of sour cider,
Then he cried: "Gonna ride in my one-way glider.
Get your wings, gang—let's hit the angel trail.
Come along, boys, let's deliver Heaven's mail.
I won't stay with the worms on the ground;
I'm a soarin' eagle! Here I go—sky-bound!

"Look out, everyone—zowie! here I come!
I'm a buzzin' bumblebee—can't you hear me hum?
I'm a boomin', zoomin' comet—don't you see me blaze?
And take it from me, I'm gonna swim the Milky Way's
Starry stream and skim the cream—Hey, there, Mars!
Watch your step, planets, I'll run over you stars!

"Look out, Missus Moon, I'm on the war path,
And I've made up my mind to take a milk bath.
If you're a nice lady, you will shut your eyes;
But I don't care, for I own these skies.
I am Robert T. Bones, the world's best flier;
And I'll swim the Milky Way if it sets me on fire!"

Off flew Bobby, and two hours later,
Back comes a swaggering, swaying aviator.
"Well, boys!" he says to us, "I swam the Milky Way!
Mars and the other stars wanted me to stay
And have a reg'lar party—but I says, says I,
I'm a-gettin' pretty thirsty—yeah, I'm gettin' kinda dry.

"So they filled up the Dipper with sparklin' champagne,
And I downed it easy, just like so much rain.
Then along comes Venus——" Bob threw out his chest—
"Boys, I'm much too modest to tell you the rest!"
Robert T. Bones is the world's worst flier,
But we must admit, he's the world's best liar!

A GHOST STORY

I have stood alone on a mountain top;
I have sailed alone on the sea;
I have worked in a gold mine underground,
With no one in miles of me.

But I have never seemed so alone
As when I flew on high,
With only cloud-banks under me,
And nothing above but sky.

I could feel the presence of spirits there;
They seemed to be following me.
I could hear them whisper and sigh and moan,
But never a one could I see.

One day I know I'll not forget,
When I was far up in the air,
Three miles from earth, with clouds in between,
A spirit came to me there.

It slipped in the plane and perched on my knee,
Then snatched the control from my hand.
I shuddered and shrank from that ghostly touch,
For it burned like a red-hot brand.

My hair stood straight on my tingling pate;
My heart pounded fast with fear.
The ghost shook the stick and my old ship bucked,
Then we launched on a mad career.

We banked—we rolled—we looped—we stalled—
We fluttered and flopped and spun,
Till the earth wheeled round like a baffled
hound—
That ghost knew the tricks, every one!

Just once before had I ever seen
Such a stunting jamboree.
It was when I went for a flight one day
With my old pal, Eddie Lee.

Ed was the craziest stunting fool
That ever abused a plane.
He was killed last year when he tried to steer
Through a hill behind a train.

Well, we were hurtling toward the ground
At a death-defying pace,
When, with a chuckle, the ghost slid out
And whined away into space.

With heart in my throat, I caught the stick
And straightened out the ship.
As if in a trance I returned to my 'drome
And ended that ghastly trip.

When back on earth, I gathered my wits,
And to this conclusion I came:
That ghost was a stunting fool, though dead;
He had loved to fill my soul with dread;
So it must have been my old pal, Ed,
Returned to his favorite game!

A JOY RIDE

Come, little girl, with me for a ride;
We'll hop in my plane, and with you at my side,
I'll go calling.
The wind whistles shrill 'mid the clouds drifting
by,
As up to the stars we go climbing on high.
There's one falling.

Yes, I know it is cold, but what can I do?
If I let go the stick to put arms about you,
We'll go drifting.
But perhaps, with my knees, I can hold the
plane straight,
While I kiss you just once, if you really can't
wait—
Nose is lifting!

Let an airplane's nose lift above the dead line,
Soon it lacks flying speed, and the wires stop
their whine;
Then it's spinning.
Now downward we flop, with a sickening drop.
Girl screams, as we start to spin like a top;
But I'm grinning.

For to me she holds tight as we fall through the
night,
And there's two miles before I must level my
flight—
Do you blame me?
I'm enjoying myself, but the girl is, I fear,
A trifle alarmed, for these words I hear:
"Now I lay me——"

THE FLYING FISH

The sky was full of silvery clouds;
The sea was full of fish.
I didn't like the finny crowds;
For wings I made a wish.

I wished and cried and prayed and sighed,
Until at last I grew
A pair of wings which were my pride.
My dearest wish was true!

Now, when I want to get away
From all my fishy friends,
I spread my wings and skyward stray
To where no fish ascends.

Up there I'm free from anxious care;
No hungry sharks are waiting
To eat me if I don't beware.
(Does this tale need translating?)

THE FOURTH DIMENSION

You have heard of Einstein's Theory, have you not?
Fourth Dimension is some more of just such rot;
All about the laws of motion,
When you mix them with the notion
That we've always had of Space when in one spot.

Now the theorists can theorize at will,
But if they would like some facts, I'll fulfill
Their dimensional desires
And whatever else inspires
Them to write the sort of bunk they sometimes spill.

Pick one out, and let me take him for a flight
In my little stunting plane—I'll treat him right!
We'll roll and spin and loop;
We'll twist and turn and swoop—
Ten dimensions will I show him, just for spite.

When what's left of him gets back upon the ground,
He will think the universe is flat and round.
And perhaps he will decide,
Following his little ride,
That plumbing Interspace is most profound!

MERMAIDS OF THE AIR

I was winging my way on a warm summer's day
At four miles or more in the blue,
When I came to a white silvery cloud which was
quite
As big as I'd ever gone through.
Soon after the mist closed about me, a list
Of the plane to its starboard wing's tip
Made me look to see what sort of anchor had got
Tangled up with the wires of my ship.

And what do you think made my dazzled eyes
blink,
As I glanced to my little plane's right?
As sure as I'm here, 'fore my eyes did appear
A most astonishing sight!

An unveiled and very beautiful fairy,
With all of a fairy's charms,
(And more than a few of an earth-maid's, too,)
Faced me with outstretched arms.

She sat on the ledge of the wing's forward edge,
And dangled her pretty bare toes.
Her fine golden hair streamed behind her, from
where
She reclined in a picturesque pose.

To myself marveled I, what does this signify?
Is that a mirage that I see?
Then I looked to my left—was I growing bereft
Of my senses? There sat two or three!

At first I believed that my eyes were deceived,
For all over my plane a score
Of mistmaids were clinging, and in chorus were
singing
In a tone that seemed to implore.

Then I thought of the sirens who lived in
environs
Of old mythological Greece;
How they called to Ulysses, with promise of
kisses,
And from all of his troubles surcease.

Now Ulysses was wise, and was deaf to their
cries,
For he longed to return to his wife;
But I wished to stay right there for the day,
And for all the rest of my life!

Just then I flew out into the blue:
Once again all was sunny and bright.
Then came what I feared—all the nymphs dis-
appeared!
Like the mist they vanished from sight.

WINGING WESTWARD

There's a fair, romantic city by Pacific's
Golden Gate,
Where the ocean drinks the rivers of a mighty
Golden State.
Neptune's pride is San Francisco, with her
golden, wavy hair,
And I know she has a harbor for a ship that
sails the air.
I can hear the wires humming as I skim the
sky's great sea,
And it seems they're softly sighing: "Flier
boy, come back to me!"
I can hear my city calling; I can hear her siren
song
In the moaning of the West Wind, as I wing
my way along.

As I wing above the prairie, as I fly o'er
mountain peak,
I can see my blue-bound city; I can hear her
voices speak.
"I am waiting," say the voices; "I await with
open arms.
You will find a lover's welcome; yours to
choose of all my charms.
San Francisco's sparkling beauty, San
Francisco's secret sweets;
Western warmth and Eastern magic lie
betweeen my jewelled streets.

With my silken soft caresses I shall soothe
your soul's unrest.
You will find both peace and passion in my
tender, throbbing breast.''

Now I wing above the desert; now I cross
Sierra's snow;
Now I see the bay a-gleaming; Golden Gate is
all aglow.
Sun is sinking in the ocean; fog is rising to the
west;
But I'll rend the gauzy garment that would
veil my city's breast.
Velvet dusk is gently falling as I glide across
the bay,
But a million beacons beckon, pointing out to
me the way.
Open wide your arms, my city; upward turn
your misty eyes;
For a faithful lover's coming, winging back
from foreign skies.

THE GYPSY FLIER

Aimlessly adrift I wander.
Heedlessly my youth I squander,
Traversing the sky.
Spring and summer climes I follow;
Like the migratory swallow,
Bird of passage, I.

Eager tourist folk I ferry;
Farmer lad and lass I carry,
For my board and bed.
Over craning crowds—to thrill them,
Recklessly I stunt, and fill them
With delightful dread.

Some day Lady Luck will fail me,
And my skill may not avail me;
Then I'll wander West.
But perhaps my ghost will bear on
Phantom ships the shades, like Charon,
To their final rest.

DON JOHN'S LAST FLIGHT

I used to know a flier by the name of Donald
Johns;
And rightly named he was, as you shall see.
"Don John" is what we called him, for his
amorous response
To girls, from seventeen to forty-three.

He loved 'em tall; he loved 'em small; he loved
'em good and bad.
He loved 'em slender, plump, and in between.
He loved their eyes and toes and thighs, and
everything they had;
And cared not whether courtesan or queen.

Each night we'd sit in barrack room and hear
Don John unbar
The strangest, weirdest, wildest storiettes
Of conquest in a cornfield, or a kitchen, or
boudoir,
That ever won a rake his epaulettes.

To make each story stronger than the ones
he'd spun before,
To Donald was a point of deep concern.
To hear his glowing portraits of the thousand
maids or more
Whom he had loved would make Lord Byron
burn.

Now one day Don flew off at dawn, and stayed
away till night.
At dinner he was quiet and subdued.
And when we gathered 'round the stove to
hear about his flight,
He opened with unusual lassitude.

"I guess I'll have to tell you boys what I have
seen today,
Although I'd rather not, because my quest
For flawless woman's at an end—please do not
scoff, I pray—
It's much too sweet a memory for jest.

"About eight thousand altitude I hit a silver
cloud,
A cloud so dense it cut my speed in half.
And first I knew I ran right through the
beautifullest crowd
Of cloud-nymphs ever seen—now boys, don't
laugh!

"I swear to you my tale is true—there were at
least a score
Of lovely visions playing volley ball.
They scattered as my ship approached; but
after them I tore,
And caught the neatest, sweetest nymph of all.

"A dress like Eve's (without the leaves), was
all that veiled her charms.
Through hair like soot her milky shoulders
shone.
I held her tight, and crushed with fright, she
fluttered in my arms.
But soon she snuggled close, and ceased to
moan.

"Her cherry lips, her dimpled hips, her toes and
knees and nose
Would make a poet paint, or painter sing.
Her breasts were molded mounds of cream,
with tender tips of rose;
Her breath was like a balmy breeze in spring.

"It's cool eight thousand feet from earth, as any
flier knows;
But strange to say, she hadn't chilly feet.
Her fairy form was twice as warm as I, with
all my clothes.
Just like that stove, she radiated heat.

"One arm, my left, was occupied in piloting my
ship;
I held her close imprisoned with my right.
But when she turned her face to mine, with
pursed and pouting lip,
I knew she had no thought of taking flight.

"I looked into those eager eyes, like phosphorescent pools,
Then bent to kiss her glowing rosebud mouth.
It seemed a drink of fine liqueur, that burns the while it cools,
Had passed my fevered lips, long parched with drouth——"

"Go on! go on!" exclaimed as one his breathless audience;
For Don had paused and sadly drooped his head.
"Go on, Don John! what happened then? Don't keep us in suspense!"
Then, mournfully and scornfully, he said:

"I felt her alabaster arms cling close around my neck.
I felt her throbbing heart against my own.
And I forgot about my ship and threw aside the stick.
The old bus bucked, and then—I was alone.

"I had instinctively let go my nymph to clutch the sides,
And frightened by the lurch, she'd flown away.
I combed that cloud from stem to stern, and where that darling hides
Is sure a mystery; but wait—some day—"

"Kill him!" we roared with one accord; then
crammed him in the stove.
And so it was that on this fateful night
We heard the last weird yarn and worst that
Donald ever wove.
His fancy had essayed its final flight!

LOOKING DOWN

Oh, you of the big, noisy city,
And you of the smug little town,
Come with me to the top of a cloud bank,
And on the world's smallness look down.

Yes, you who are wrapped in the meanness
Of self and the routine of work,
Come up to the great silent places,
Where the ghosts of your ancestors lurk.

Forget, for an hour, today's duties,
And hop in my air-faring ship.
We'll go on a heavenly voyage—
It may be an enlightening trip.

We'll look from a few miles skyward,
And the checkerboard surface we'll scan.
I'll show you the cities like ant-heaps—
The works of the being called Man.

* * *

In that square live a million humans.
That white is where the wave whips.
Down there is the world's greatest harbor.
Those specks are the sea's finest ships.

That lane is a city's great highway.
The ant is a train westward bound.
Those smudges you see are foundries;
And sweatshops lie all around.

Up here between heaven and planet,
We are far from turmoil and strife.
Up here there's no barter and scramble,
And you grasp a new meaning from life.

You'll return to the fight for existence,
And you'll see how foolish it is
To condemn the act of another,
Because your point of view is not his.

You'll go back to the haunts of the people,
And you'll know how petty we are,
With all of our civilization—
When one sees it from afar.

A FLIER'S PHILOSOPHY

As I wing my way across the skies,
Seems as though I get the cosmic touch.
All the world in clear perspective lies;
And up here I understand so much
That escapes my vision down below;
Such as Cause and Relativity—
All the complex scheme of things—so
I shall tell you what I feel and see.

* * *

We are always groping for the truth,
Tearing loose Tradition's bonds and bars,
Searching with the hopefulness of youth,
Reaching for the bright, elusive stars;
Stopping now to gloat o'er what we find,
Driven on by gnawing discontent,
Spurning all that we have left behind,
Worshipping our god, "Accomplishment."

Dreaming wondrous, vivid, rainbow dreams,
Straining eyes to look beyond the veil,
Rushing where the light of knowledge gleams,
Up the steep and never-ending trail;
Slipping, sliding back with each step gained,
Dropping into depths of sullen sloth;
Ever lured by visions ne'er attained;
Thus we gain our scant and sluggish growth.

Peoples fighting madly to be free;
Millions vainly seeking more from life;
Needing war to prove our unity,
For with peace comes individual strife;
Evolution harshly holding sway
With its cruel, cold "survival" creed;
Competition shouldering its way;
Comradeship receiving little heed.

* * *

Then I ask: "Why this grinding mill?
Whither leads this hopeless, endless chain?
Are we on the same old cycle still?
Shall we ever reach a higher plane?
Must our Western culture fade and fall?
Must it lie with Egypt's, Athens', Rome's?
Can we not escape that rhythmic thrall,
Which leaves naught but mouldy catacombs?"

Out of Space the answer comes: "You can!"
Yes—there is a certain, simple way!
Learn what means the Brotherhood of Man:
Learn to live together, day by day.
Know that freedom comes from fitting in:
Know that you can gain but what you give.
Learn to lose, and you have learned to win—
When you learn—your race and *you* shall live!

THE LAST JUMP

I wonder if that bag's all right.
One—two—three—four—
Good God! It's caught and tied up tight!
It's the end—I'll jump no more.

A mile to drop! 'Twill take a year—
Down—down—I wonder why—
I knew 'twould come—I felt 'twas near—
Down—down—it's hard to die.

I wonder if there's anything
In what they tell of Heaven and Hell.
I wonder if my ghost will spring
From my crushed and shattered shell.

It's hard to breathe—the end is here—
I wonder if the girl will cry—
The press will say: "He knew no fear."
I see the headlines as I die—
Good-by—

THE PULITZER CUP

Graceful, man-made creature of the air,
Roaring, rushing demon of the sky,
Point your shining snout to yonder square;
Bellow forth your blaring battle cry:
Speed—speed—speed—

The barrier's down—we're off! now hit the trail!
Come on, you beauty—show your breed!
The hounds of Time are close behind your tail!
Drink in the gas, and speed—more speed—
Speed—speed—speed—

Lazy breezes turn to tearing gale;
Pistons pounding like a corps of drums;
Wires whining with a mournful wail;
Keen propeller purrs and whirs and hums:
Speed—speed—speed—

We swerve upon the stretch—the goal's in view!
Now let your steel lungs gasp and pant—
You win! the fastest thing that ever flew!
Boom out your throbbing victory chant:
Speed—speed—speed—

FIRE

The pilot starts—a warning sound;
The motor knocks, the pistons pound.
Athirst for oil, a bearing's ground
To dust, and white with heat.
A puff of smoke—a blinding flash.
The motor's caught! The red flames lash
On cowl and wing. They gnaw and slash—
Through cloth and wood they eat.

His face is wet with sweat of fear.
His soul is sick; he feels the sear
Of sweeping flame, and knows it near—
The end all fliers dread.
Three miles to earth—what hope to gain?
No matter how he slips the plane
From side to side, his skill is vain—
The hungry flames fast spread.

Ten thousand feet—caught in a hell
Of furnace heat—words cannot tell
Of agony that can compel
A plunge out into space.
He frantic climbs from out the seat;
He shields his face from scorching heat,
And longing looks—then leaps to meet
A hungry earth's embrace.

SLOW—MARCH!

One moment, soldiers of the air—
A comrade's passed upon his way;
A flier's gone—gone West, we say;
So let us bow our heads in prayer,
A tribute that we all can pay.

Let's pray that on another shore
His forebears proudly watch him land
His plane, and run to grasp his hand;
That fliers who have gone before
Will welcome him to their command.

The conquest of the air has cost
Us many of our very best;
But surely he is doubly blest,
Beneath whose name this line's embossed:
"He played his part—he earned his rest."

Attention! soldiers of the sky—
Let's put aside regret for pride;
For one of us has dignified
By death the names of all who fly.
Salute the comrade who has died!

TALIAFERRO'S DEAD

Let's stop, and say one little word
In memory of the boys who fell
Before they reached the realm of shell
And shot, to make their thunder heard.

For those who died upon the field,
I cannot weep, for they had won
Their belts and spurs for duty done;
For them the chapel bells have pealed.

For those who died upon the way,
Unhappy victims of their fate,
(And training indiscriminate),
I sing this sympathetic lay.

At Taliaferro Field I trained,
Where one a day fell to his death.
Time after time I held my breath
And watched that awful score maintained.

The order came to rush us through,
For pilots were in great demand.
An air offense was being planned;
Another "final drive" was due.

They rushed us through without delay,
And paid no heed to loss in planes
And men—and still that blot remains
In memories of us who stay.

I used to sit at morning meal
And look across the table at
The other fellows where they sat,
And guess whose doom that day would seal.

And when the sun had sunk from sight
Behind the hills, to end our day,
In solemn tones a friend would say:
"Poor Tommy won't come in tonight."

No honors theirs, but I declare
A war of man 'gainst man is naught
Compared with that blind war we fought
To conquer unknown realms of air.

So let us say a word of praise
For those whose efforts seemed in vain;
Those shock troops of the great campaign.
In martyr flame their names will blaze!

TWELVE SOLILOQUIES

R. M.

I was one of the younger fliers.
From the first I loved the game,
And I flew at every opportunity.
I liked to show off,
And when I had flown two hours solo,
I climbed high above the airdrome
And tried to loop.
A barracks flier had told me how.
When the plane was upside down,
Something went wrong,
And it began to spin on its back.
I lost my head and forgot
How to get out.
We spun seven thousand feet
To the middle of the airdrome.
My last thought was
That everyone would see me hit.

V. C.

I was sent here to teach the novices to fly.
Upon my chest I wore the Cross of War,
Though I had done nothing to earn it.
Before I entered the service of my country
I was a dancer of renown.
I was a good entertainer and became popular
With all in the Service.
I was only a fair flier,
But I loved the game.
They sent me back from France
Because they did not want me killed.
At Taliaferro the boys worshipped me.
And all tried to get into my flight.
I led what some called a wild life,
But I liked my work and did it well.
One day a student flier
Crossed in front of my plane
When I was landing.
Instinctively I pulled nose up.
My plane turned on its back
And dived into the ground.
The whole camp mourned me
And everyone said
I had given my life to save another.
I did not deserve that, but—
I am glad I was a "good fellow."

L. V.

My memory was always poor,
Often failing me at a crucial moment.
But when my instructor told me
That to get out of a spin
I must push control forward,
I swore not to forget;
And I repeated over and over:
"Stick forward—rudder neutral—"
Until the words buzzed in my brain
Night and day.
And that morning
When my plane went out of control,
And into a spin,
I repeated exultantly:
"Stick forward—"
And I pushed it forward.
But it seemed that nothing happened.
Then frantically I jerked it back,
For I didn't trust my memory—
And I spun into the soft, black earth.
The funny part is
That now I know
I was right at first.

T. O.

Before I came here I had won
The reputation of being
A hard-boiled cadet.
For discipline I had only contempt.
The other boys admired my audacity
In breaking regulations
And defying my superiors.
But at last I went too far
And got into trouble.
From then on I was always in hot water.
After a time it got so the others shunned me,
And said I was a fool.
And the admiration for which I had risked so much
Was no longer mine.
But I would not give up,
And became more wild.
One night I went into town without leave,
And came back drunk at a late hour.
But I did not get caught.
Next morning I was sent up on altitude test.
It was foggy and I lost the earth.
But I did not care, for I was still drunk.
Then my plane went into a spin.
I did not care, for I was sleepy.
It spun down through the fog
And into the ground.
I do not care, for the world was all wrong,
And I am glad to be out of it.

C. B.

I was a quiet, reserved fellow.
The other boys liked me,
Though few knew me well,
For I was not a good mixer.
I was a fair flier
And tended to business.
I led a clean life and did my best.
One day I was sent up to make landings.
At the same time B. J. went up.
He was a noisy, disagreeable fellow
Whom everyone detested;
And a wild, reckless flier,
Who never watched where he was going.
The blue flag was up.
That meant left-hand circuits.
I circled the field to the left.
It was foggy and the visibility was poor.
Suddenly a plane crashed into mine
From the other direction.
It was B. J.
He had circled to the right.
I was killed.
B. J. was crippled for life.
I am glad I am not B. J.

B. H.

I was proud.
I was sensitive.
I hated and feared the devilish thing,
With its angry bellow and treacherous move-
ments,
Which I had to ride each day
Into the lonely heavens.
But more I feared the contempt
Of my instructor
And the scorn
Of my comrades.
So I hid my fear and continued to fly—
Until, one day, when miles from earth,
The plane lurched, and refused to obey my hand.
Then I became mad with fear,
And fought for my life
With the devil which sought to destroy me.
But it went into a spin,
And whirled sickeningly toward the earth,
Laughing all the while at my helplessness.
And then it was my turn to laugh.
In killing me
The thing destroyed itself.

A. E.

These careful fellows always made me sick.
I didn't know the meaning of fear,
And I would try anything once.
One day I took off toward the hangars.
There was no wind,
And as I came close,
It seemed I would not clear the roofs.
But I jerked my plane
Into a steep, climbing turn to the left.
I looked down and waved mockingly
At those who watched me, open-mouthed.
Just then another plane crashed into mine.
As the two planes fluttered toward the earth,
Locked in a death grip,
I saw the other pilot cursing me.
And now I know why.
The day's order was "right-hand circuits."
I had turned to the left.

A. Y.

Worry—worry—worry—
A flier cannot worry and live.
Though I was always careful
And knew my tricky steed,
There came that day
When my conscience cried aloud:
"You are unfaithful
To the sweet, trusting bride
You left behind."
Then my hand faltered and shook,
And would not obey my weakened will.
And gleefully my treacherous mount
Slid sideways to our common doom.
Fool that I was!
To worry so over my broken vows.
In that moment of darkness
And new vision,
I saw my pure, unsophisticated bride
In the arms
Of a quartermaster's clerk.

L. W.

I had read of the wonderful exploits
Of Guynemer, Bishop and Ball.
And my whole being thrilled with the thought
That some day I would be like them.
The U. S. Air Service rejected me
On account of my eyes;
I was near-sighted.
I went to Canada and bribed my way through.
The Royal Flying Corps needed pilots.
I worked hard and passed through the ground
school,
And was sent here to fly.
I soon found I could not see to land a plane;
So I had powerful lenses fitted inside my
goggles.
And no one knew but my best friend.
When I had flown for two months without a
crash,
One day the strap which held my goggles broke,
And they blew away behind.
I was two thousand feet in the air.
I came down and tried to land.
But I couldn't tell how close the ground was,
And my eyes blurred from the cold wind.
My plane struck nose first.
Cruel fate! I had so longed to surpass
The marvelous feats of Guynemer.

S. B.

I was what is known as a "barracks flier."
Before coming to Taliaferro,
I used to overawe the other boys
By telling of my wondrous exploits,
And of the dangers of the air.
I was the only one who had ever flown.
At first they listened respectfully;
But the instructors soon found me out,
And if I talked of my day's flying,
When we gathered by the barracks stove
Those cold January nights,
The fellows would smile
And look at each other.
Then my instructor, who had been patient,
Was killed.
Then I lifted up my voice again,
And loudly proclaimed that I was through;
For what chance, said I, have we cadets,
When a wonderful flier like Castle is killed.
But I got no sympathy,
For everyone thought I was yellow.
Then one night I drank
To regain my self-respect,
And wandered away drunk in the fields.
Pneumonia brought escape
From my shame.

D. N.

Only two hours instruction,
And I am sent up alone.
Luck is with me
And I circle the airdrome safely.
Now to make a landing.
Motor off, I glide down.
Careful—I won't clear the hangars.
Motor on—stick back—
Now what!
A nose-heavy old plane.
A frantic, untutored pilot.
A dive with motor on.
A rending crash—black night—wreckage—
Is this the end?
No wings—no ribbons on my tunic?
No London—no Paris furloughs?
No admiring girls back home
To listen to my boasts of battle
In the sky?
Damn the unfit plane!
Damn the instructor who sent me up!
Damn the Service—the whole system!
And the curse of a million futile dead
On those who sit back and trade
On human love of glory!

S. J.

It was early morning when I returned
From the arms of my latest love
To Taliaferro Field No. 3.
And thirty minutes later
I was sent into the sky.
But my thoughts wandered
From flying to soft flesh
And red lips—
Warm, clinging lips.
And my plane crashed
In the Benbrook village graveyard.
A most appropriate place to die.
My regrets are less for myself,
Or my last conquest,
Than for the unborn son
Who will some day
Curse my memory.

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